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ABSTRACT

The possibility is discussed of using a generic guide for syllabus construction across the less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) to facilitate the development of proficiency/communicatively-oriented syllabuses and materials in the LCTLs. Issues addressed include the degree of overlap among LCTLs and the most desirable unit for constructing such a curriculum guide. The absence of needs analysis for LCTLs is seen as a major obstacle, and the possibility that "materials templates" may serve the same purposes as a general curriculum guide is suggested. Contains 35 references. (LB)

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NFLRC Research Notes

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Towards a Generic Curriculum Guide for the Less Commonly Taught Languages

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Towards a generic curriculum guide for the less commonly taught languages

Graham Crookes, Raine Sakka, Stacy Shiroma, and Lei Ye

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0. BACKGROUND

From time to time, second and foreign language teachers and curriculum specialists have considered the possibility that the degree of commonality to be found across certain language groups and student groups is sufficiently great that, rather than constructing a different curriculum for each language or group, it would make sense to design a curriculum which would apply generally across these student groups and languages. The principal reason advanced for designing such a curriculum is to save effort, by not duplicating needs analyses and related program development initiatives across languages and/or student groups. A curriculum or syllabus document of such a multipurpose nature might be referred to as 'generic', and as a 'guide', since it would be the basis for the development of any number of more narrowly specified curricula. In a recent proposal which resulted in the establishment of the National Foreign Language

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Center at the University of Hawai'i (Seymour, 1990, p. 21) the design of a "generic curriculum model" for the less-commonly taught languages (LCTLs) was mooted, on the basis of the possibility that a "significant overlap" exists across these languages. This proposal finds support in the limited archival literature which pertains to the LCTLs. Walker (1991, p. 142) notes that

> there is but a handful of experienced and willing creators of instructional materials who are trained to utilize the instructional technologies now available. Some agreement on curricular goals would make the work of this small group much more accessible to all of the LCT[L]s involved in materials development.

The present Technical Report discusses the desirability and feasibility of such an effort.

In Seymour (1990) it was proposed that any such generic curriculum guide would (1) pay "particular attention to the needs" of the less commonly taught languages; (2) that it would specify "functions, contexts and contents roughly in order"; (3) that sample activities and materials would be provided "for each topic" as well as suggestions for their adaptation; (4) "testing formats" for each unit would be specified; and (5) that there would be classroom testing of the guide.

Obviously, completing the full project as proposed would imply a substantial undertaking, the careful carrying-out of which might be expected to take a number of years. The initial phase of the investigation logically would have to, first, accumulate and review existing needs analyses for the LCTLs, if any, and also estimate the degree of overlap existing. In the major part of the initial conceptual phase of the project it would be necessary to assess the status of curriculum design theory in foreign language education, particularly work done on the less commonly taught languages, and match this up with work done elsewhere in language education, particularly ESL[1]. This would involve particular attention to the matter of the units of analysis of the syllabus (particularly as several different ones are referred to in the initial project specifications). In what follows, we briefly survey the presently existing knowledge base in each of these areas, after a preliminary section establishes some definitions. We then present recommendations concerning the feasibility and form of efforts in this area.

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1 Ferguson & Huebner (1989, p. 2) call this "one of the bright spots of FL instruction and research in the United States".

1. DEFINITIONS OF THE LESS COMMONLY TAUGHT LANGUAGES

In order to eventually develop a generic curriculum model for the LCTLs, we first need to identify exactly what these languages are (cf. Swaffar, 1989). At present, there is no one agreed framework according to which a language is regarded as less commonly taught. Ryding (1989) applies the term 'Less Commonly Taught Language' (LCTL) to all languages except English, French, German, and Spanish. According to Walton (1989), at least 5000 languages can be classified as LCTLs. He categorizes them as follows:

- Indo-European LCTLs (e.g., Italian and Portuguese)
- non-Indo-European LCTLs
  group 1: those of larger-enrollment (e.g., Chinese and Japanese), and
  group 2: those of smaller enrollment (e.g, Burmese, Swahili, etc.).

Consequently, we feel justified in taking a definition of convenience. For our purposes, the LCTLs will be defined as those LCTLs which the National Foreign Language Resource Center at the University of Hawai'i can easily obtain materials for and conduct direct investigations of. That is to say, primarily the larger-enrollment Asian LCTLs, in particular Japanese[2], Chinese, and some of the smaller-enrollment LCTLs which are Asian or Pacific (e.g., Korean, Thai, Tahitian, etc.), but no African languages and no IndoEuropean LCTLs.

To add to the definitional picture, it may be noted that the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) divides languages into four major groups (Walker, 1989) by difficulty of the languages for native speakers of English. Difficulty is time (in hours of instruction) needed to attain near-native proficiency. Group 4, the most difficult group, constitutes Arabic, Chinese, Japanese and Korean, all major LCTLs (cf. Walton, 1989, n.d.).

[2] We feel this is also justified partly by Hawai'i's numerical prominence—"By 1986 ... 90% of the students of Japanese were in three states—Hawai'i, New York, and California" (Dandonoli, cited in Walker, 1991, p. 134). See also the various examples of exceptionally high enrollment in various Asian LCTL programs at university and community college level in the State of Hawai'i, cited in Lambert (1990).

2. MATERIALS AND NEEDS ANALYSES FOR THE LCTLS

The most desirable resource for establishing the possibility of a generic curriculum guide would be needs analyses. If it could be established that the populations that are currently being taught LCTLs have basically the same needs, then it remains to consider whether or not pedagogical considerations place too many obstacles in the face of a generic approach.

In the U. S., most of the LCTLs are taught primarily at universities, with no prior instruction or exposure expected or required of students. On that basis, it might seem that similar populations are being serviced by much LCTL teaching in the U. S. However, for university teaching, most LCTL syllabuses reflect no explicit attempt to determine the needs of students, but reflect instead structural analyses of the languages. Archival literature (journals, technical reports, etc.) in this area is very scarce, but having supplemented a review of what is available with correspondence with LCTL authorities, we conclude that there are no useful attempts at needs analyses in this area.[3] In addition, Walker (1991) specifically proposes needs analysis-type projects as part of an agenda for the LCTLs, with the implication that such projects have not previously been undertaken.

As is well known, materials for the teaching of the LCTLs reflect the traditional orientation of foreign language teaching generally. Materials have an underlying structural orientation, as opposed to a proficiency orientation, neglect sociolinguistic competence[4], and assume command of the language is to be obtained through familiarity simply with syntax and vocabulary, often gained primarily by way of translation and drill. The syllabus for instruction in a LCTL at university is usually a construction which arises out of the selection of textbooks, rather than something determined by the empirically-assessed needs of students.

The absence of decent modern materials for the LCTLs (cf. Walker, 1991) is a good initial rationale for any project which can bring them into existence swiftly and

[3] Indeed, there is very little elsewhere in FL education, but cf. Harlow, Smith, & Garfinkel (1980), and Cole & Miller (1985).

[4] The situation is little better elsewhere, for example Spanish (Ruiz, 1987, p. 49):

> Today's Spanish textbooks offer no apparent response to recent linguistic and pedagogical trends. Rather, these materials illustrate adherence to a philosophy of textbook writing that treats language units as teaching units, and presupposes knowledge of the linguistic code as a prerequisite to classroom activity involving language use. As a result, problem solving activities, strategies for interaction, principles of negotiating meaning, and many other features that contribute to the development of communicative competence are not well represented.

efficiently, which would be one of the reasons for having a generic curriculum guide. On the other hand, the absence of almost any needs analyses in this domain is a significant obstacle to being able to state that there is overlap in what, say, learners of Tagalog need with what, say, learners of Burmese need, and that consequently a generic curriculum guide is justified. However, the term 'overlap' pertains to other aspects of the LCTLs besides student needs. We now turn to a fuller considerations of its implications.

3. THE ROLE OF OVERLAP IN DESIGNING A GENERIC CURRICULUM GUIDE

A major problem faced in considering the feasibility of a generic curriculum guide concerns the lack of clarity with regard to the possibility of "significant overlap" among the languages. In discussing some issues that are common to many if not all of the LCTLs, Ryding (1989) identifies microperspective issues (that stem from the similarities within the various languages themselves) and macroperspective issues (those on the academic/professional level). Microperspective issues concern (a) linguistic, and (b) historical/political/cultural matters; macroperspective issues refer to (i) the availability of resources for LCTLs, (ii) common rationales for teaching these languages, and (iii) connections between organizations involved in the teaching of LCTLs as well as other general pedagogical matters.

Concerning (a), some common "linguistic" features that Ryding (1989) identifies as difficulties that face English speakers who are trying to acquire an LCTL include: 1) non-roman script, 2) diglossia (as in, for example, Arabic), 3) non-Indo-European origin, 4) complex inflectional system, 5) non-SVO word order, and 6) "unfamiliar" (i.e., to speakers of English) phonological features.

Concerning (b), overlap in this area relates to cultural systems seen from a "western", ethnocentric viewpoint as markedly different from those of the "western" world, as well as the widely-shared experience among LCTL cultures of having been colonized by "western" cultures.

In (c), at the professional/academic level, teachers of LCTLs are currently operating on their own rather than coming together under some central organization that supports funding and research for resource materials, teacher training, journal publication, etc. (Ryding, 1989) This fragmentation is probably due to the diversity that

exists among the languages, not to mention a general hesitation for professional workers in the field of education to share their knowledge among themselves.

In addition, enrollment fluctuations and lack of professional training for teachers of the LCTLs seem to be common problems. Many LCTL teachers face low status within the academic setting and do not enjoy career security. Many rarely reach full faculty status; they are hired part-time or short term, usually contingent upon student enrollment. This in turn reflects the low status of the teaching of foreign languages as opposed to literatures within departments officially concerned with both *equally* (cf. Freed, 1991, on the location of the related matter of FL acquisition research).

A few discussions of individual LCTL programs and courses are available in the literature, though these are not of a comparative nature (e.g., Walker, 1989—a discussion of an intensive Chinese as a Foreign Language curriculum). Walker (1989) remarks that the current state of the art (in Chinese language teaching) is "quite messy" (by which he seems to mean both diverse and disorganized), with the exception of the EASLI summer program, which, he claims, holds some promise of being a model for other foreign language programs.

There has been little if any empirical investigation of pedagogic overlaps, which reflects the lack of funding hitherto observed in this area, as well as the status of research into FL pedagogy and acquisition (Freed, 1991). However, a general assumption in the FL community seems to be that the ACTFL/ETS Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) and indeed the pedagogical ideas of the whole "proficiency" movement can be broadly applied to the LCTLs. Though this is not the place to discuss the matter in detail, we should point out that considerable reservations have been put forward by specialists in SL acquisition concerning both the well-foundedness of this scale and its utility in curriculum/syllabus design:

> The gap between the development of the OPI and its associated guidelines and research in the various areas that might contribute to such development is of particular concern especially now that attempts are being made on the one hand to extend the notion of proficiency to curriculum design, elaboration of syllabi, formulation of appropriate classroom procedures, and preparation of pedagogical materials, and on the other hand, to apply it to the less commonly taught language. Without clear principles defining the relationship between the criteria used to assign rankings of the OPI and the constructs underlying language learning, to

> speak of proficiency-oriented syllabi or proficiency-oriented classrooms can only be misleading. (Valdman, 1988, p. 121)[5]

4. CURRICULUM DESIGN THEORY

4.1. Introduction and definitions

Consideration of developments in second/foreign language curriculum design is necessary to facilitate further specification of the feasibility of a generic curriculum guide. Its form would undoubtedly be influenced by the forms of the target syllabuses or curricula which would be developed from it for each separate LCTL course. A preliminary point of definition concerns a distinction that can be made between curriculum and syllabu . In discussions of SL program design, curriculum is often used as interchangeable with syllabus We should note, however, that curriculum can also be seen as a a wider term than syllabus:

> 'Curriculum' can be distinguished from 'syllabus', in that a syllabus is typically a specification of the content of the teaching and learning and the organisation and sequencing of the content. Content and its organisation is subsumed within a curriculum as part of methodology. A syllabus is therefore only part of the overall curriculum within which it operates. (Breen & Candlin, 1979, p. 108)

And by curriculum, we may understand

> an educational program which states (a) the educational purpose of the programme (the ends); (b) the content, teaching procedures and learning experiences which will be necessary to achieve this purpose (the means); (c) some means for assessing whether or not the educational ends have been achieved. (Richards, Platt, & Weber, 1985, p. 70)

In the present discussion, we will take curriculum to refer to the narrower meaning, equivalent to 'syllabus'.

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5 See also all the articles in the special issue of *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* (vol. 10, no. 2) and in addition, Chi (1989) and Garrett (1989).

4.2. Syllabus types

Syllabus types can be divided into two general classes, synthetic and analytic (Wilkins, 1976). These two categories do not represent a dichotomy, but rather define the two end points of a continuum (Wilkins, 1976). A synthetic syllabus breaks the target language down into discrete linguistic elements with the aim of making learning easier for the learner:

> different parts of the language are taught separately and step-by-step so that acquisition is a process of gradual accumulation of the parts until the whole structure of the language has been built up... At any one time the learner is being exposed to a deliberately limited sample of language. The language mastered in one unit of learning is added to that which has been acquired in the preceding units. (Wilkins, 1976, p. 2)

The learner's task in a program using a synthetic syllabus is to "re-synthesize the language that has been broken down into a large number of smaller units." (Wilkins, ibid.) Thus, the synthetic syllabus depends upon the learners' presumed ability to learn a language in discrete, individual parts (e.g., grammatical structures and functions) and put them together when the time to communicate arises.

Analytic syllabuses do not take the target language and divide it into discrete pieces like their counterpart mentioned above. Instead, they

> present the target language whole chunks at a time...without linguistic interference or control. They rely on (a) the learners' assumed ability to perceive regularities in the input and to induce the rules... and/or (b) the continued availability to learners of innate knowledge of linguistic universals and the ways language can vary, knowledge which can be reactivated by exposure to natural samples of the analytic syllabus type. (Long & Crookes, 1990, p. 3)

Analytic syllabuses are thus basing their approach on the learners' analytic capabilities to determine the rules of the target language based on the input they receive.

4.2.1. The unit of analysis

Every syllabus needs some unit to base its lessons and materials around. Current syllabuses use at least the following: word, structure, notion, function, topic, situation,

and task. Long and Crookes (1990) report that if the unit of analysis takes the form of a linguistic element—structure, notion, function, word, topic, and situation—this commits the syllabus designer to a synthetic syllabus. (For a complete review of synthetic and analytic syllabuses, see Long and Crookes, 1992, forthcoming).

Long and Crookes (1990) outline some of the problems that beset synthetic syllabuses. First, such syllabuses often result in stilted examples of the target language appearing in the associated materials, because the syllabus designers are often restricted to conform to a set of linguistic specifications (e.g. a 300-word vocabulary, or a specific verb tense as the instructional point of a particular module). These restrictions imposed supposedly define "levels of proficiency" and do not represent how people speak or write in the real world.

Second, synthetic syllabuses are flawed because they assume a conception of language acquisition that is unsupported by research in and out of the classroom. Synthetic syllabuses present linguistic forms separately. Long and Crookes (1992, p. 6) argue that "...research shows that people do not learn isolated items in the L2 one at a time, in additive, linear fashion, but as parts of complex mappings of groups of form-function relationships". In addition, synthetic syllabuses attempt to elicit target-like mastery of the items presented in one simple step. However, SL research on the acquisition of German as a second language, and on ESL also, has established that both naturalistic and classroom learners pass through fixed developmental sequences in word order, negation, questions, relative clauses, etc.—sequences which require lengthy use of non-target like forms and non-target-like use of forms (see Pica, 1991, for review). The content of synthetic syllabuses is ultimately based on an analysis of the language to be learned, and often this analysis focuses on an idealized native speaker version of that language. SLA research reports no evidence that the native-like units of analysis employed in synthetic syllabuses "...are meaningful acquisition units, that they are (or even can be) acquired separately, singly, in linear fashion .." (Long & Crookes, 1992, p. 11).

Because of the deficiencies of synthetic syllabuses and their associated units of analysis, we would be inclined to favor as the basic unit to be used in constructing a generic curriculum guide, a unit which lends itself to use in an analytic syllabus. All the three main types of SL analytic syllabus discussed in the literature use task in one form or another as their unit of analysis. As discussed in Long and Crookes (1992, forthcoming) these three types are those of Prabhu (1987), Breen (1984) and Long (e.g.,

1985). For reasons of space, we will simply state that (as discussed at length in Long & Crookes, forthcoming) the approach of Prabhu is seriously flawed, and would not even be perceived as communicative or proficiency-based by many SL teachers (student-student interaction is ruled inadvisable, for example); that of Breen, while intriguing, is logistically infeasible in most FL contexts, since it calls for the existence of extensive "materials banks" and the negotiation of the syllabus by student and teacher on a continuing basis. Even that of Long is at the very earliest stages of development, but it is on this that we will concentrate.

Basically, Long combines what is known about how learners actually learn a SL with the most recent developments in needs analysis and syllabus design, deriving particularly from work in English for Specific Purposes (ESP), to propose that SL syllabuses be designed by first determining learners' needs in terms of the real world tasks they must perform in the SL, then from these, deriving pedagogical tasks. These are principally role-play format classroom activities, which can be arranged in small groups of increasing difficulty to allow the students to gradually approximate to the target real-world task, by using language appropriate to both the demands of the task and their current capabilities. The target tasks might well be presented to the students as totally authentic video-recordings (if primarily in the oral modality) or in authentic written form otherwise.

The major problem with this concept is the difficulty of applying it to situations where students' needs appear to be unclear. However, impressionistically, it seems to be the case that in circumstances where FL teachers express the view that students' needs are unknown, or that students actually have no need for the FL in question, this is really because they or their curriculum designers have never thought in those terms before. Most FL teachers can say what they would like their students to be able to do, both in terms of being able to use the FL in the (admittedly sometimes unlikely) event that they were able to visit the foreign country, but also in terms of what they would like the students to be able to do in the less unlikely event that they met a native speaker of the TL. Alternatively, FL teachers can typically specify what they would like students to be capable of in the classroom situation, either orally, or in terms of the students' potential interaction with written forms of the language, some of which at least might be of the literature of the target language. Anything that seems desirable for the students to be able to do with the target language is a legitimate real world task. The question is simply then how to find an approximation to the task that can be carried out in the classroom,

so that learners can approach the target without being subjected to the additional task of having to build the language up from its 'sub-atomic' elements.

4.3. A model for a curriculum guide and its implications

The next questions to be addressed concerning a future curriculum guide relates to existing guides and their potential as models for a future LCTL guide. We need to ask what exists, what their rationale(s) are, whether there is an associated research base or needs analysis, how the guide is implemented and what student population it addresses.

At present, however, there is little work that even mentions curriculum design in the LCTLs. An exception is Walker (1989), for Chinese, but this demonstrates the limitation of work done in the context of LCTLs on this topic. For example, Walker claims that the Chinese syllabus discussed "emerged from the theory and practice of Chinese language pedagogy" (p. 79) but makes no reference to general SLA theories. In one of the most enlightened general discussions of SL program design for LCTLs, Walton (n. d.) concludes that the current state of the art is by no means well-developed. In the absence of suitable models or discussion in literature directly linked to the LCTLs, we turn to more distant sources for suggestions.

The only widely-disseminated second.foreign language prototype syllabus is that often referred to as the 'Threshold Level,' developed in a project sponsored by the Council of Europe (CoE), one of whose aims was to increase the scale and effectiveness of second language learning in Europe. Since second language learning is so widespread in Europe and takes place under the most diverse conditions, the CoE sought to develop a comprehensive protosyllabus (cf. Alexander, 1978) that would accommodate the most common needs of language learners, and permit the development of second language qualifications which were comparable across (European) languages. In order to do this, they first identified two general groups of foreign language learners according to "needs" (Trim, 1980): (1) learners who needed a basic command of the language and want enough knowledge of a second language to maintain casual relationships; (2) learners who had special purposes for learning the language (i.e., to study German to negotiate business contracts, etc.). A common need for both groups was identified in the "Threshold level" (T-level) which represents the lowest level of foreign language ability that all learners need regardless of their ultimate learning objective (van Ek & Alexander, 1975, p. 11).

The most important document resulting from this project is the proto-syllabus mentioned earlier (van Ek & Alexander, 1975). This contains a listing of situations, functions, topics, general and specific notions, language forms, and a lexicon for the T-level (expressed in English) derived from the initial specification of the needs of the target learner group. From it, materials designers have constructed textbooks in a number of European languages, without having themselves to conduct needs analyses. Obviously, many different sets of materials can be derived from the Threshold level specifications—the only limits are the materials designers' imagination and the textbook publishers' preferences and budgets.

Despite the success of this project, there are a number of limitations that need to be mentioned. First is an inherent problem in the use of a basic notional-functional approach to syllabus design. From specifying what the hypothetical learner would need to do in the target language, the designers made the intuitive leap to what notions and functions the learners would need to be able to command. Then, for the version produced in English, they also guessed what might be typical "exponents": lexical and syntactic manifestations of these notions and functions. It can be argued that this constitutes too much outright guesswork, even though by experts, and reflects inadequate attention to what native speakers and learners actually do in real life use of the target language.

Second, a more practical concern: there is a large, experienced, and well-established community of professional materials writers for the major European SLs, especially for ESL. These individuals experienced no difficulty converting the bare lists of notions and functions into communicative materials (or what would now in the FL community be called "proficiency oriented materials"). However, for the LCTLs, not only do we have a shortage of experts who have an understanding of the theoretical and research-based principles of SL learning and teaching, we also have no more than a handful of individuals who regularly turn out professional materials of any sort, let alone communicative or proficiency-based materials. So if a generic curriculum guide is to have any immediate impact on the availability of adequate materials for the teaching of the LCTLs, it probably cannot leave the would-be designer of materials with nothing more than a bare list of notions and functions. A list of their exponents in each of the target languages is also no use. Besides being guesswork, it would defeat the purpose of

the exercise by not being generic, and it would also be most likely to be misused by structurally-oriented teachers and materials designers.

Accordingly, we would argue that to be effective, as well as linking up with the latest understanding of SL learning and teaching, a generic curriculum guide would probably have to specify likely real-world tasks, and then go on to indicate typical pedagogical tasks through which the real world tasks might typically be attained.

5. THE POSSIBILITY OF A GENERIC CURRICULUM GUIDE FOR THE LCTLS

We restate here the original indicators (Seymour, 1990) of what might be needed in a LCTL generic curriculum guide. Point (1) indicated that the guide would pay "particular attention to the needs" of the less commonly taught languages. Not only is this good practice in syllabus design, it is essential for a task-based syllabus. The preliminary inquiries we have conducted suggest that there is next to nothing existing in this area. A generic curriculum guide would seem to be impossible without a substantial needs analysis effort first.

Point (2) referred to the guide as specifying "functions, contexts and contents roughly in order". This would appear to indicate an over-willingness to rely on concepts used in general discussions of syllabus types. We would argue that while notions and functions would certainly emerge from real world tasks and their associated pedagogical tasks, they are unlikely to be predictable from tasks, nor do they serve as a suitable skeleton on which to base any generic approach.

Point (3) stated that that sample activities and materials would be provided "for each topic". Provided that "topic" can be interpreted broadly as referring to a group of tasks, this would not only be feasible, but logistically and practically desirable from an implementation of innovations point of view. Suggestions for the adaptation of such activities could equally well be provided.

Point (4): it was proposed that "testing formats" for each unit would be specified. This is not something to be found in the sole model generic curriculum guide discussed above. It is quite unusual for syllabuses to also specify tests or contain a test design element. In general, however, a task-based syllabus, unlike other syllabus types, does carry with it a clear implication concerning the kind of test format appropriate. The best

way to see if a learner has learned to do a given real-world task in the target language is to give him/her a chance to carry out the task under controlled test conditions. That is to say, performing the task is itself the test. The classical example of this is the driving test. No well-administered country would allow anything other than passing a real-life test of driving to be sufficient to qualify a learner-driver. Since the issues associated with such testing are conceptual and logistic, rather than being a matter of writing or sketching the tests (since their core elements would be the real-world tasks identified by the needs analysis), it would seem most appropriate for suggestions concerning task-based testing to be produced in a separate document. (For discussion of task-based testing, see Baker, 1989. Some current literature, e.g., Raffaldini, 1988; Weshe, 1983, though not using the term "task", deals with testing FL learners' abilities to communicate concerning a particular problem in a specific communicative situation, and so is also relevant.)

Finally, in point (5), classroom testing of the guide was mandated. The word "classroom" seems a little out of place here. The guide itself is a precursor to classroom practice. Logically, its use is by the materials designer or the materials-writing teacher of the LCTLs. Any test of it would be by way of interviews with such individuals, and investigations of the problems they might have encountered in its use. A particular area of difficulty which we might identify (speculatively, at this stage) would concern the role of non-romanized writing systems in some LCTLs, and their absence in others. In any case, testing or evaluation of the guide could not be an integral part of the guide itself though it would of course be a desirable part of a large-scale project, whose mere feasibility is what is being considered here

Of all of these areas, the only one seriously problematic is the area of needs analysis. The absence of pre-existing needs analyses is quite remarkable. On the other hand, even if they did exist, it is questionable whether they would be couched in a form which would make them suitable for future task-based needs analyses. Because of the urgency of the demand for up-to-date proficiency oriented materials in the LCTLs, we feel it is defensible to go ahead even in the absence of needs analyses and make use of collections of sample materials, of a kind that have already become widely available for ESL—for example, Grellet's (1981) collection of exemplary reading exercises, or Nunan's (1989) collection of oral classroom activities. A trial collection (Shiroma & Crookes, 1991) of such materials has been utilized in NFLRC training workshops at the University of Hawai'i. However, needs analysis work is urgently needed, and until that has been set in place the future of a true, rationale and defensible generic curriculum guide for the LCTLs will remain uncertain.

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